

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY DEMANDS ANSWERS ON VULNERABILITY OF LNG TANKERS TO FIRES

Letter to Ridge Calls for Clarification of Homeland Security Department's Assertion That Flammable Polystyrene Not Used On LNG Tankers, Despite Manufacturers' Claims to Contrary

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today sent a letter to Tom Ridge, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, regarding the vulnerability of liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels to terrorist attacks. In today's correspondence, Rep. Markey identified information in the Department's May 19, 2004 response to his earlier inquiry that appears to contradict evidence contained in the public record.

"I am concerned that the foam polystyrene insulation used in LNG tankers could catch fire and create a dangerous situation that is harmful to Massachusetts residents. When I wrote to Secretary Ridge to express these concerns, I was assured that polystyrene insulation was 'not used on LNG carriers precisely because it's susceptible to melting and deformation in a fire.' However, documents produced by major LNG vessel manufacturers in Norway and Japan detail the use of polystyrene foam insulation in their own vessel designs. Moreover, the U.S. Coast Guard has warned of the flammability of polyurethane foam on its Web site, and OSHA issued a Hazard Information Bulletin fifteen years ago to alert the public that polyurethane 'will, when ignited, burn rapidly and produce intense heat, dense smoke and gases which are irritating, flammable and/or toxic.' Today, I am seeking clarification from the Department to determine why it is asserting that foam polystyrene insulation is not used in LNG tankers despite evidence to the contrary from the vessel designers themselves, and what the Department is doing to ensure that the insulation used in LNG tankers would stop the spread of a fire onboard," Rep. Markey said.

Rep. Markey's letter requests that the Department respond to a series of questions, including:

- Who in the federal government tests the insulation on LNG carriers for fire resistance?
- Who is responsible for determining whether this insulation is acceptable for use on LNG carrier vessels operating in U.S. waters?
- What are the standards used by the federal government for determining whether or not the insulating materials used on LNG carrier vessels are acceptable?
- What hazard analysis has been done to examine what would happen in the event that a fire on an LNG carrier vessel ignited the insulation or otherwise compromised it?
- Are older ships required to be retrofitted with new insulation if they use insulating materials, like polystyrene, which have now been determined to be highly flammable? If not, why not? If so, how does the federal government verify that this has occurred?
- In light of the post-9/11 threat, is there any plan by the Department, or by the Coast Guard, to review the safety standards applicable to LNG carriers (including fire safety standards) to

determine whether they need to be upgraded to better address the threat of sabotage or terrorist attack?

“The safety and security of residents who live near the Everett LNG terminal depend on a thorough analysis and understanding of the risks associated with the LNG tankers and their offloading at the terminal. I am disturbed that the Department of Homeland Security, which shares responsibility for ensuring this safety and security, appears to be uninformed about a fundamental aspect of LNG tanker design that affects tanker vulnerability to fire. As proposals are put forward to site additional LNG terminals around the country, we must get to the bottom of the dangers that they could pose if attacked or involved in an accident. My follow-up letter to Secretary Ridge today seeks further information to get to the bottom of this important issue,” Rep. Markey concluded.

The text of the letter can be viewed at <http://www.house.gov/markey>

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